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TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD
Special Committee on Preferences
Twenty-second session
Geneva, 23 October 1995
Item 2 of the provisional agenda

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Provisional agenda and annotations to the provisional agenda

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II. ANNOTATIONS TO THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA

Introduction

By its resolution 77 (III), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development decided to establish the Special Committee on Preferences as a permanent mechanism within UNCTAD. Its terms of reference are described in section VIII of the agreed conclusions adopted by the Special Committee at its fourth session. Accordingly, at its twenty-second session the Committee will, inter alia, carry out the periodic review and policy review of the generalized system of preferences.

The twenty-second session of the Special Committee will be held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, from 23 to 27 October 1995.

Item 1: Election of officers

Rule 18 of the rules of procedure of the main Committees of the Trade and Development Board states that: "At the commencement of the first meeting of each regular session, the Committee shall elect a Chairman, five Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur from among the representatives of its members. These officers shall constitute the Bureau of the Committee. In electing the officers, due account shall be taken of the need to ensure an equitable geographical distribution." Moreover, rule 19 states that "the Bureau of the Committee shall consist of seven members, including four members from Groups A and C combined, two members from Group B and one member from Group D, referred to in the annex to General Assembly resolution 1995 (XIX) as amended".

Accordingly, the Chairman of the twenty-second session will be elected from among the representatives of countries members of List D, while the Rapporteur will be elected from among the representatives of countries members of List A (Africa).

The Committee will complete its Bureau by electing five Vice-Chairmen, in accordance with rule 19 of the rules of procedure of the former main Committees¹ (i.e. two from List B, three from Lists A and C combined).

Item 2: Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

The provisional agenda for the twenty-second session of the Special Committee on Preferences was approved by the Special Committee on Preferences at its 186th plenary meeting on 20 May 1994. At that session, the Special Committee on Preferences decided to continue preparations for the 1995 policy review on the GSP. This twenty-second session will therefore undertake the 1995 policy review on the GSP.

In its decision 179(XVIII) of 17 September 1978, the Board stipulated that the annual sessions of the Special Committee on Preferences should be conducted according to the following procedure:

"1. The plenary meetings of the Special Committee on Preferences should be devoted primarily to issues of a general character concerning the generalized system of preferences;

"2. During the sessions of the Special Committee on Preferences, informal plurilateral consultations should be held on individual schemes, if so requested, between preference-receiving countries, on the one hand, and the preference-giving country concerned, on the other. These plurilateral consultations would be private and confidential in character."

In his note of 18 May 1995, the Officer-in-Charge of UNCTAD invited States members which were interested in holding plurilateral consultations to advise the secretariat well in advance of the twenty-second session of the Special Committee so that the necessary arrangements could be made for holding such consultations. The secretariat will in due course inform States members concerned of requests received and of consequent arrangements for consultations.

Item 3: Review of the implementation, maintenance, improvement and utilization of the generalized system of preferences, rules of origin and technical assistance

The Special Committee will have before it the "Eighteenth general report on the implementation of the generalized system of preferences" (TD/B/SCP/12). Chapter I covers the changes and improvements that have taken place in the various schemes since the twenty-first session of the Special Committee on Preferences. Chapter II updates the trade effects of the system to cover the most recent period for which information is available. Chapter III summarizes the current situation of rules of origin. In this connection, the Committee will have before it the report of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Rules of Origin (TD/B/SCP/14 - TD/B/SCP/AC.1/3). The Special Committee may wish to take note of this report. Chapter IV covers the activities undertaken by the UNCTAD Technical Cooperation Programme on the GSP and Other Trade Laws in 1994 and the first half of 1995. It underscores the importance of these activities and highlights priority issues facing the Programme. In addition, the Special Committee has before it the report of the Second Ad Hoc Expert Group on the Generalized System of Preferences, held from 15 to 16 May 1995 (TD/B/SCP/15).

Item 4: Policy review: towards revitalization of the GSP

The Special Committee on Preferences will have before it the secretariat report "Policy options and proposals for revitalization of the generalized system of preferences" (TD/B/SCP/13). Chapter I outlines the evolution of international trade and highlights deliberations on the GSP since UNCTAD VIII. Chapter II covers issues relating to the GSP which are divided into three categories: conceptual aspects, operational aspects and technical assistance. Each category contains an outline of the issue, summary of the deliberations and arguments to date, and suggests policy options for post-Uruguay Round GSP schemes.

Item 5: Provisional agenda for the twenty-third session of the
Special Committee on Preferences

In accordance with rule 8 of the rules of procedures of the former main Committees (by which the Special Committee is guided), during the session the secretariat will submit a draft provisional agenda for the twenty-third session of the Committee.

Item 7: Adoption of the report of the Special Committee on
Preferences to the Trade and Development Board

The Board, at its pre-sessional executive session prior to the first part of its forty-second session, will consider the report of the Special Committee.

The attention of the Committee is drawn to paragraph 6 of decision 302 (XXIX) adopted by the Board on 21 September 1984, whereby the Board instructed its main Committees and other subsidiary bodies to ensure that their reports were concise, action-oriented and not exceeding the limit of 32 pages. The Special Committee may wish to invite the Rapporteur, in cooperation with delegations and the secretariat, to make every possible effort to conform to this decision of the Board.

Notes

1. At its fifth session the Committee decided to continue being guided, as appropriate, by the rules of procedure of the Committee on Manufactures (ibid., para. 230), which have since been incorporated into a consolidated set of rules of procedure of the main Committees of the Board (TD/B/740).